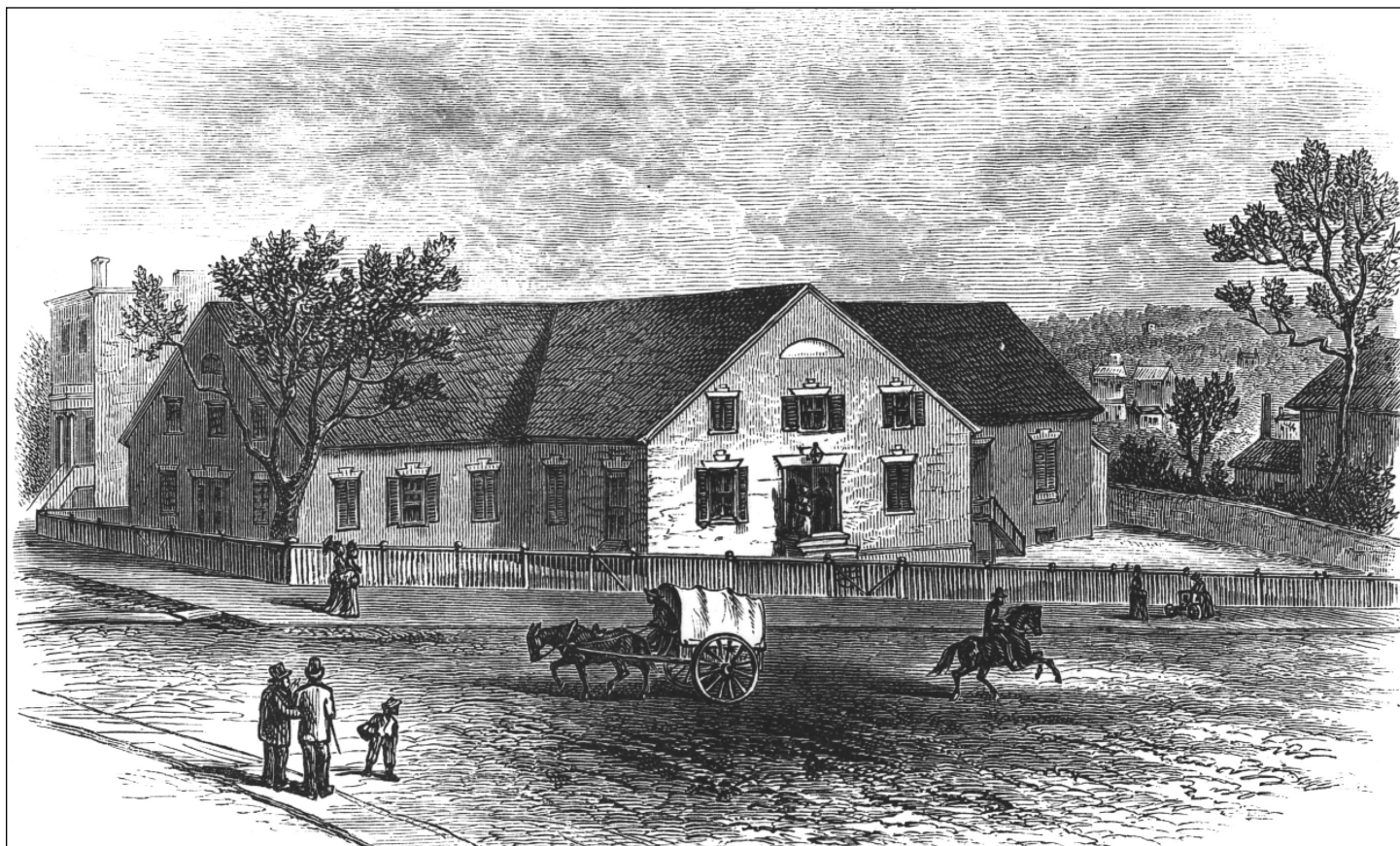


*African American Church Histories
in the Library of Virginia*



Historically, religious institutions have provided strength, stability, and support for their members as well as a focal point for social interaction. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the African American community from the antebellum period to the present.

In its effort to collect materials relating to the culture and history of the commonwealth, the Library of Virginia has assembled a wide variety of materials about Virginia religious institutions, including many for African American churches. Types of materials presented in this research guide include:

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HISTORIES OF CONGREGATIONS

The scope of congregational histories may vary from a few paragraphs in an anniversary bulletin to scholarly histories. In addition to a narrative history of a church's activities, these materials may contain membership and leadership rosters, biographical information about their pastors, names and life details of prominent members, and often photographs of pastors, groups, and significant events in the institution's past.

Alexandria

Lynch, Anna. *Compendium of Early African Americans in Alexandria, Virginia*. Alexandria, Va.: Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria, 1993–1995.

Includes an index compiled from the records of the First Baptist Church and Trinity Methodist Church as well as Censuses and Free Negro Registers.

Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Oakland Baptist Church and the Twenty-fifth of Its Minister Rev. Luther Mills: September 18, 1966–October 4, 1966. [Alexandria Va.: Oakland Baptist Church Anniversary Committee], 1966.

Wallace, Alton S. *The Saints of Alfred Street*. Alexandria, Va.: Alfred Street Baptist Church, 1996.

Arlington County

Fiftieth Anniversary of the Macedonia Baptist Church, 1911–1961. Arlington, Va.: Anniversary Committee, Macedonia Baptist Church, [1961].

Bedford

Washington Street Baptist Church. *The Organization and Growth of the Washington Street Baptist Church, Bedford, Virginia, 1866, 1939*. [Bedford, Va.: Washington Street Baptist Church, 1939].

Charles City County

Elam Baptist Church. *1810. 1910. History of Elam Baptist Church, Charles City County, Va.* Richmond: Reformer Electric Print., 1910.

———. *Organization and Development of Elam Baptist Church, 1810–1910*. Ruthville, Va.: The Church, 1976.

As well as a history of the church and description of its programs, this report includes biographies of church leaders and a genealogy of Abram Brown, the founder of the church.

Charlottesville

McKinney, Richard I. *Keeping the Faith: A History of the First Baptist Church, 1863–1980*. Charlottesville, Va.: First Baptist Church, 1981.

Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Air Conditioned, Charlottesville: A Century of Christian Service, 1867–1967. [Charlottesville, Va.: n.p., 1967].

Hanover County

Gales, Melinda D. *African-American Baptist Churches in Hanover County, Virginia, 1865–1900*. Master's thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1999. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 2001.

Harrisonburg

Toliver, Ruth M. *History of Kelley Street United Brethren in Christ Church, Newtown, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1882–1906*. [Gaithersburg, Md.: Signature Books, 1998.]

King and Queen County

Hundley, W. T. *History of Mattaponi Baptist Church, King and Queen County, Virginia*. Richmond: Appeals Press, [1928].

Mattaponi Baptist Church, founded August 9, 1828, was comprised of both white and African American members until 1866 when Zion Baptist Church was formed by the black members of the church. This history includes descriptions of practices with slaves and a brief description of the formation of Zion Baptist Church. Membership lists include names of slaves and their owners.

Loudoun County

Thompson, Elaine E. *Courage, My Soul: Historic African American Churches and Mutual Aid Societies*. Leesburg, Va.: Loudoun Museum, 2000.

Norfolk

First Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church. *Trinity A.M.E. Church, Berkley, Virginia*. Berkley, Va.: G. S. Ansell Print., [1906].

“Church of the Week.” *Richmond Afro-American*,

“1st Calvary Has Had 4 Pastors in 63 Years,” 25 March 1939, 16.

“First Holiness Church Was Organized in 1899,” 15 April 1939, 24.

Souvenir Program, Fiftieth Anniversary Exercises . . . 1861–1911, St. Luke’s African Union Methodist Protestant Church. Norfolk, Va.: New Century Printery, 1911.

Petersburg

Bragg, George F. *The Story of Old Saint Stephen’s, Petersburg, Va.* [Baltimore, Md: Church Advocate Print., 1906?].

Jackson, Luther Porter. *A Short History of the Gillfield Baptist Church of Petersburg, Va.* Petersburg, Va.: Virginia Print Co., 1937.

Sherwood, William Henry. *Life of Charles B. W. Gordon, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Petersburg, Virginia and History of the Church {from 1756 to 1885}*. Petersburg, Va.: J.B. Ege, 1885.

Portsmouth

“New Church Built on ‘Ashes’ of Old (Mt. Calvary Baptist Church),” *Richmond Afro-American*, 23 September 1939, 23.

Richmond

Historical Records Survey of Virginia, Works Projects Administration. *Inventory of the Church Archives of Virginia: Negro Baptist Churches in Richmond*. Richmond: Historical Records Survey of Virginia, 1940.

Outlines the background of the church associations and conventions and their member churches in Richmond. Provides location, physical description, history, and archival holdings as well as references for further information. Although repositories may have changed since 1940, this inventory provides a means of tracking difficult to find materials.

One Hundredth Anniversary of Ebenezer Baptist Church, 1858–1958, 216 West Leigh Street, Richmond, Virginia. Richmond: n.p., 1958.

Fifth Street Baptist Church. *Programme of the 50th Anniversary of the Fifth Street Baptist Church, October 5 to 19, 1930, Richmond, Virginia*. [Richmond: Service Print Shop, 1930].

Ryland, Robert. “Origin and History of the First African Church.” In *The First Century of the First Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia, 1780–1880*. Richmond: Carlton McCarthy, 1880.

Irons, Charles F. “And All These Things Shall Be Added unto You: The First African Baptist Church, Richmond, 1841–1865,” *Virginia Cavalcade*, 47 (Winter 1998): 26–35.

First Baptist Church, South Richmond. *A Historical Chronology, 1821–1992: Preview of the Comprehensive History of First Baptist Church, South Richmond*. [Richmond: First Baptist Church, South Richmond, 1992].

———. *A Comprehensive History of First Baptist Church, South Richmond, 1821–1993*. Richmond: First Baptist Church, South Richmond, 1993(Vol. 1), 1999(Vol. 2).

Gilliam, Hannah J. G. *History of the Seven Pines Baptist Church, Sandston, Virginia, 1872–1972*. [Sandston?, Va., 1972?].

Johnson, Nessa Theresa. *A Special Pilgrimage: A History of Black Catholics in Richmond*. Richmond: Diocese of Richmond, 1978.

Mosby Memorial Baptist Church. *The Programme of Services Representing the Twentieth Anniversary of the Clay Street Baptist Church (formerly New Baptist Church) and Dedication of Its New Home, Hereafter to Be Known as the Mosby Memorial Baptist Church from Sunday October 2nd to Sunday October 16, 1927, Inclusive*. N.p., 1927.

Second Baptist Church. *The History and Chronology of Second Baptist Church: Idlewood Avenue and Randolph Street, Richmond, Virginia, 1846–1996*. Richmond: Second Baptist Church, 1996.

Second Baptist Church. *Souvenir Program, Second Baptist Church. First Anniversary of the Pastor, Joseph T. Hill and the Eighty-third Anniversary of the Church, October 14–21, 1929*. [Richmond: Second Baptist Church, 1929].

———. *Sharon Baptist Church, First and Leigh Streets, Richmond, Virginia. 1887 Golden Jubilee 1937...* [Richmond: St. Luke Press, 1937].

Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church. *Souvenir Programme, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia; Centennial Celebration of Our Church and the John Jasper Memorial, Sunday, April 2, 1967 to Friday, December 1, 1967*. [Richmond: Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, 1967].

Swansboro Baptist Church. *The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Swansboro Baptist Church and the Fourth of Its Pastor, Rev. Emmanuel C. Kent...* [Richmond: Deluxe Print., 1938].

West, Sandra L. *Greater Mount Moriah Baptist Church: From Seventy-Six, a Mighty Fortress*. Richmond: Metropolitan Business Guide, 1997.

“Church of the Week.” *Richmond Afro-American*,

“Leigh Street M.E. Keeps Doors Open for Community Service,” 22 October 1938, 13.

“Fifth Street Baptist Flock Began Life in 1880 in Odd Fellows’ Hall,” 29 October 1938, 24.

“Ebenezer Baptist Was Erected by Donations from Colored and Whites,” 5 November 1938, 16.

“First Baptist Church (of South Richmond) Is Oldest Separate Colored Church in Richmond,” 12 November 1938, 12.

“Hood Temple Was Organized in 1911; Moved Several Times,” 19 November 1938, 24.

“First African Baptist, Born in 1841, Has Had only Three Pastors,” 26 November 1938, 173.

“Mosby Memorial, Daughter of 5th Street, Born 1907, Has Fourth Pastor,” 3 December 1938, 24.

“Sharon Baptist Church Is Nearly 52 Years Old,” 10 December 1938, 17.

“First Mt. Olivet Pastor Kept Post 35 Years, Died in 1935,” 17 December 1938, 21.

“Pastor Who Built Fourth Baptist Edifice Served 46 Years Until Death in 1926,” 24 December 1938, 12.

“Second Seventh-Day-Adventist Church Obtained First Church Home in 1912,” 14 January 1939, 12.

“Fifth Baptist Was Born in Wake of Freedom’s Guns,” 21 January 1939, 16.

“Mount Calvary Had First Cornerstone Laid in Richmond by Odd Fellows,” 28 January 1939, 15.

“Third Street Bethel Church, Erected 1859, Still Points the Way to Progress,” 4 February 1939, 6.

“Goodwill Baptist Church Formed by Six Men and Women in 1923,” 11 February 1939, 14.

“Mt. Moriah Baptist Church Held First Sessions in Armstrong High,” 18 February 1939, 14.

“Sixth Street Church, Daughter of Mt. Carmel, Began with 40 Members,” 25 February 1939, 15.

“Rising Mt. Zion Emerged from Quaker School in Fulton in 1869,” 4 March 1939, 15.

“Trinity Baptist Church, Founded in 1906, Started as a Mission,” 11 March 1939, 12.

“Timothy Baptist Church Was Begun with Thirteen Members,” 18 March 1939, 24.

“Mount Vernon Baptist Began in 1905 with Its Present Pastor,” 1 April 1939, 15.

“Grayland Avenue Baptist Born in Home of Mrs. Martha Johnson,” 8 April 1939, 6.

“The Rev. W. H. Branch, Founder and Only Pastor of 7th Street Baptist,” 15 April 1939, 24.

“Church of God in Christ Was Dream of Elder R. N. Johnson,” 22 April 1939, 15.

“Osgood Memorial P.E. Was Born during World War Days,” 29 April 1939, 15.

“52-Year-Old Mt. Carmel Records Congregation’s First Song,” 13 May 1939, 15.

“Little Church around the Corner Organized in 1890 with 14 Members,” 20 May 1939, 24.

“St. Philip P.E. Church Organized as Mission Sunday School in 1859,” 27 May 1939, 24.
“Charity Baptist Had 12 Members When It Was Organized in 1915,” 10 June 1939, 24.
“Mount Zion Baptist Church Can Boast Social and Religious Service,” 24 June 1939, 6.
“First Union Baptist, Organized in 1895, Had Noted Dedication Speaker,” 22 July 1939, 7.

Salem

Shiloh Baptist Church. *Fiftieth Anniversary, 1896–1946: Shiloh Baptist Church, Alabama and Burwell Streets, Salem, Virginia*. Roanoke, Va.: Rev. F. E. Alexander, 1946.

ASSOCIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

Reports of church and Sunday school associations provide lists of clergy, ordinations, and often memorial biographies of recently deceased prominent members. Although more impersonal than histories of congregations, the facts that can be gleaned from these reports can provide dates and locations for further research.

Directory of the Negro Baptist Churches in the United States. Chicago: Illinois Historical Records Survey, 1942.
Volume II contains listings of the Virginia Baptist Associations, their member churches, addresses and pastors.

Further information about these associations is found in their minutes or proceedings. Library of Virginia holdings include scattered individual copies and the following more extensive microfilm collection:

American Baptist-Samuel Colgate Historical Library. *African-American Baptist Annual Reports, Virginia, 1865–1990*. Rochester, N.Y.: American Baptist-Samuel Colgate Historical Library, 1997. Film 1656.

Fiftieth Anniversary of the Methodist Sunday School Union Association of Petersburg and Vicinity (program). Petersburg, Va.: The Association, 1916.

Winfield, C. W. *Minutes of the Forty-second Session of the Virginia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*. Petersburg, Va.: Presses of Frank A. Owen, 1907.

BIOGRAPHIES OF VIRGINIA CHURCH LEADERS

Biographies of pastors and other church leaders provide information not only about the subjects but also about the churches and congregations they helped to form.

Berry, Leonidas H. *I Wouldn't Take Nothin' for My Journey: Two Centuries of an Afro-American Minister's Family*. Chicago, Ill.: Johnson Publishing, 1981.

Berry, Silas N. *Memories of Rev. R. D. Merchant*. N.p.: [1935?].

James, Allix Bledsoe. *Three Score and Ten Plus: The Pilgrimage of an African American Educator*. Richmond: Choice Communications, 1998.

James, Isaac. “*The Sun Do Move: The Story of the Life of John Jasper*.” Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1954.

Harris, Odell Greenleaf. *It Can Be Done: The Autobiography of a Black Priest of the Protestant Episcopal Church Who Started under the Bottom and Moved up to the Top*. Alexandria, Va.: Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1985.

Robertson, Benjamin W. *Just as He Promised: A Lifetime Directed and Protected by the Word of God*. Franklin, Tenn.: Providence House, 1998.

Proctor, Samuel DeWitt. *The Substance of Things Hoped For*. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995.

Spencer, Jon Michael. *The Hymnody of Charles Price Jones and the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A.* Reprinted from *Black Sacred Music* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1990):[14]–29.

West, Landon. *The Life of Elder Samuel Weir (Colored)*. 10th ed. Covington, Oh.: Tribune Print., 1909.

White, William S. *The African Preacher: An Authentic Narrative*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1849.
The African preacher was a slave in Nottoway County, Va., called Uncle Jack.

DENOMINATIONAL HISTORIES

Denominational or general histories of African American religious development often present clues or pathways for further research.

Bragg, George F. *The Colored Harvest in the Old Virginia Diocese*. Baltimore, Md.: n.p., 1901.

Brydon, George MacLaren. *The Episcopal Church among the Negroes of Virginia*. Richmond: Virginia Diocesan Library, 1937.

Butt, Israel L. *History of African Methodism in Virginia...* Hampton, Va.: Hampton Institute Press, 1908.

Corey, Charles H. *History of the Richmond Theological Seminary*. Richmond, J. W. Randolph Company, 1895.

Earnest, Joseph B. Harris. *The Religious Development of the Negro in Virginia*. Charlottesville, Va.: Michie Co., 1914.

Gullins, W. R. *The Heroes of the Virginia Annual Conference of the A.M.E. Church*. Smithfield, Va.: W.R. Gullins, 1899.

Hamilton, C. Horace. *The Negro Church in Rural Virginia*. Blacksburg, Va.: Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1930.

Harris, Odell Greenleaf. *The Bishop Payne Divinity School: Petersburg, Virginia, 1878–1949*. Alexandria, Va.: Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary, 1980.

Hopkins, William I. *History of the Virginia Baptist State Church School Convention*. Richmond: The Convention, 1945.

Jackson, Luther Porter. "Religious Development of the Negro in Virginia from 1760–1860." *Journal of Negro History* 16 (April 1931): 168–239.

Reavis, Ralph. *Virginia Seminary: A Journey of Black Independence*. Bedford, Va.: Print Shop, 1989.

Robert, Joseph C. *Excommunication Virginia Style*. Reprinted from the *South Atlantic Quarterly* XL no. 3, July, 1941.

Smith, Edward D. *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Rise of Black Churches in Eastern American Cities, 1740–1877*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988.

Sobel, Mechal. *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University press, 1988.

Tate, Thad W. "The Humanitarian Impulse: Religion and Education," in *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*. Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg, 1965.

Taylor, Alrutheus Ambush. "Religious Efforts among the Negroes" and "The Impressions the Church Made." In *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia*. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926

MANUSCRIPT RESOURCES

African Methodist Episcopal

Williams, Frances Tsepho, comp. Personal papers collection. Historical materials about Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1867–1999. Accession 36905.

Includes fliers, histories, newsletters, and programs relating to Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia, and photocopies of minutes and committee reports of the Virginia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church from 1867–1869, 1872, 1877, 1886, and 1896.

Baptist

Ryland, Garnett. Permission and character certificates for slaves seeking to join Bethel Baptist Church, 1832–1860. Accession 22681.

Permission and character certificates, 1832–1860, for slaves seeking to join Bethel Baptist Church in Clarke County, Virginia.

Ebenezer Baptist Church (Richmond, Va.) Church records collection; Baptist. Records, 1858–1980 [microform]. Miscellaneous Microfilm Reels 1088–1089. Accession 33482.

This material consists of seventeen volumes that contain matters of church business and discipline as well as some lists of baptisms and deaths. Periods covered are 1858–1876, 1879–1883, 1892–1904, 1908–1911, 1910–1925, 1921, 1961–1974.

First African Baptist Church (Richmond, Va.) Church records collection; Baptist. Minute books, 1841–1930 [microform]. Miscellaneous microfilm reel 494. Accession 28255.

The material includes three minute books. The first covers the period from 3 October 1841 to 7 August 1859. There is an account of the organization of the church and many names are listed of candidates for baptism, persons dismissed or excluded, and deaths. The second volume, 7 June 1875 to 12 September 1897, contains very full minutes. The third volume covers the period from 5 October 1897 to 2 June 1930. There are no membership lists in any of the three volumes.

Gillfield Baptist Church (Petersburg, Va.) Church records collection; Baptist. Minute book, 1815–1842. Accession 20784

This minute book covers the period from 4 February 1815 to 15 April 1827. Some sessions list those present. Names of those received for membership are also recorded. Membership lists are detailed and well organized.

Messingford Baptist Church (Charlotte County, Va.) Church records collection; Baptist. Minute book, 1823–1869. Accession 28981

Messingford Church was constituted in 1785. In 1865, the black members requested and were granted permission to organize a separate church. These minutes cover the period from June 1823 to March 1869. Membership lists appear on pages 145–202.

Mount Tirzah Church (Charlotte County, Va.), Church records collection; Baptist. Minute books, 1834–1915. Accession 24261

Includes three minute books. Membership lists are included in each volume.

Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church. 130th Anniversary Committee (Richmond, Va.) Church records collection; Baptist. Records, 1997. Accession 35664.

The Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church was organized on 3 September 1867 by Reverend John Jasper. These records consist of material from the 130th Anniversary Committee of the Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, including a program, a copy of "De Sun Do Move—The Celebrated Sermon of John J. Jasper," and assorted pamphlets and copies of photographs.

Catholic

St. Joseph's Catholic Church (Richmond, Va.). Church records collection; Catholic. Records, 1884–1912 [microform]. Miscellaneous microfilm reel 1084. Accession 33476.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church was the first Catholic church in Richmond, Virginia, established to serve the African American community. The records include the baptismal register, 1884–1912; marriage records, 1908–1912; marriage register, 1884–1912; death records, 1908–1912; confirmation register, 1885–1912; and first communion register, 1885–1912.

Holy Innocents Foundling Asylum (Richmond, Va.). Church records collection; Catholic. Records, 1888–1912 [microform]. Miscellaneous microfilm reels 1085–1086. Accessions 33477, 33478.

St. Francis Colored Foundling and Orphan Asylum, Richmond, Virginia, was founded in 1893, and the name was later changed to Holy Innocents Foundling Asylum.

Miscellaneous reel 1085, Accession 33477, consists of two volumes. The first volume, 1894–1897, shows orphan's name, date of birth, parents' names (if known), by whom the orphan was sent, and baptismal information. The second volume, 1888–1906, includes index, chronological list of deaths, orphan's name, place and date of birth, color, sex, parents' names, date orphan was admitted, and reason. Miscellaneous reel 1086, Accession 33478, includes a third volume, 1906–1912, containing index, chronological list of deaths, orphan's name, place and date of birth, color, sex, parents' names, date orphan was admitted, and reason.

Episcopal

Fairfax Parish (Fairfax, Va.) Church records collection; Episcopal. Records, 1765–1928 [microform]. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Photoduplication Service, 1950. Misc. Reel 137. Accession 23956a-b; 29952a-i

Relevant records include Register, 1825–1855, consisting of baptisms, burials, marriages, and communicants. Also includes baptisms, marriages, and burials for African Americans. Accession 23956a is the transcribed copy of this volume. Transcribed copy includes index. (Accession 29952e; Misc. reel 137, no. 5)

Henrico Parish (Richmond, Va.) Church records collection; Episcopal. St. Philip's Church history, St. Philip's Church vestry books, 24 May 1869–2 May 1887 Microfilm Records, 1730–1941. Accession 28068a and 28068b-d (bound together).

St. Philip's Church, an African-American church established in 1861, ceased to exist in 1865 probably due to the burning of Richmond at the end of the Civil War, but in 1866 reapplied for admittance to Council. Materials include St. Philip's Church History (n.d.), St. Philip's Church vestry books, 24 May 1869–2 May 1887; 7 April 1888–7 July 1892; 22 March 1895–5 February 1904. Register entries are found in the first volume, and miscellaneous material in the third volume extends the date range to 1941.

St. Andrew's Parish (Brunswick County, Va.) Church records collection; Episcopal. Records, 1732–1946 [microform]. Misc. reels 649, 1072–1073. Other Format: Vestry book, 1732–1786 (Accession 19769) also available in photostat.

Relevant materials include two Parish registers, 1838–1915. The first register, 1838–1891, contains a list of ministers, baptisms, communicants, marriages, funerals, confirmations, and offerings for whites and African Americans (Item 2 on Misc. reel 1073).

Methodist

Monumental Methodist Church (Portsmouth, Va.) Church records collection; Methodist. Records, 1772–1936 [microform]. Miscellaneous Microfilm Reel 380. Accession 29799f.

Includes reports from the African Methodist Church, organized by African-American members of Dinwiddie Street Methodist Church who wanted their own church.

Methodist Episcopal

Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Virginia Conference. Norfolk District. Princess Anne Circuit. Church records collection; Methodist. Register, 1828–1868 [microform]. Accession Princess Anne County reel 54.

Relevant records include a "Register of Colored Members," November 1859.

United Brethren in Christ

Kelley Street United Brethren in Christ Church (Harrisonburg, Va.) Church records collection; United Brethren in Christ. Records, 1892–1905. Accession 37081

On 28 November 1892, the Reverend T.K. Clifford officially organized this African-American congregation. Records include a minute book; financial records, minutes of a Quarterly Conference meeting; and loose papers. These records have been transcribed in, History of Kelley Street United Brethren In Christ Church, Newtown, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1892–1906, by Ruth M. Toliver, 1998.

IMAGES

Various images, including photographs and drawings, are available for research in the Picture Collection (By appointment, 804-692-3703, Monday through Friday, 9–4:30).

Compiled by Gail Tatum
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